



## Shri Ram Vilas Paswan holds video conference with Food Ministers of States and UTs to review foodgrains distribution during lockdown

## Centre asks States/UTs to check hoarding and ensure fair prices of essential commodities during the lockdown

## Wheat procurement for RMS 2020-21 to commence from 15th April, 2020

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The Centre has asked the States to ensure that there is no hoarding and price rise of essential commodities during the lockdown. This was conveyed by the Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Shri Ram Vilas Paswan during a video conference with the State/UTs Ministers of Food, Public Distribution and Civil Supplies, here today. He directed that Micro-Level Plan should be initiated to ensure that Essential Commodities are available at fair price in the local markets. Shri Paswan said the States have been empowered under the Essential Commodities Act to ensure its compliance.



Shri Paswan also directed that all arrangements are undertaken to commence the Wheat procurement for the Rabi Market Season (RMS) 2020-21 from 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2020. Following the guidelines and example set out by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Shri Paswan underlined that social distancing norms are strictly followed during the procurement. The Minister said a duty roster for staff, workers and labourers should be prepared by all procurement centres, godowns, offices etc. and ensure that there is no shortage of labour.

Shri Paswan said all States and Union Territories have been provided with enough foodgrain stocks to fulfil the targets under the Prime Minister Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY). Under the PMGKAY, all PDS beneficiaries will be provided with 5 kilogram foodgrains (rice or wheat) per person free of cost for the next three months. Foodgrain allotments have been made based on every individual beneficiary of the PHH (Priority Households) and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) schemes. Besides all PDS beneficiaries per card/family will be provided with free 1 kg pulses for the next three months, Shri Paswan said, for which NAFED has been delegated as the nodal agency. He urged the States to run campaigns to inform the beneficiaries about the scheme. Complimenting the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for taking care of the poor and needy at this critical juncture, Shri Paswan said all expenditure involved in the distribution of free foodgrains and pulses under the PMGKAY scheme for the next three months will be borne by the Centre.

Pointing out that the Food Corporation of India (FCI) has been transporting huge quantities of foodgrains across the country during the lockdown, Shri Paswan urged the States/UTs to accelerate the pace of distribution of foodgrains and pulses. The Minister reminded that the States/UTs can opt to draw the allotment of rations under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) required for the next six months as per their convenience. Government of India has allowed the States and UTs to draw rations on credit of three months, he said. Shri Paswan said if any individual of a beneficiary family is left out, he/she should be immediately added so that none remains deprived of the benefits entitled under the NFSA scheme.

The Minister said under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS), the retail price of Rice has been fixed at Rs.22 and Wheat at Rs.21 per kilogram each. He said the Government has also allowed any NGO, voluntary agencies engaged in social welfare and private institutions to lift foodgrain stocks directly from FCI Depots during the lockdown.

Shri Paswan asked the State Governments to coordinate with millers to ensure availability of wheat flour at their disposal. All norms of social distancing should be strictly followed while distributing foodgrains at the Fair Price Shops and PDS outlets and the shop owners/PDS operator and labourers must wear protective face masks and gloves, he added.



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